

U.S. Rep. Kind: Calls on Secretary Perdue to take action to support Wisconsin's dairyland during COVID-19 crisis

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La Crosse, WI—Today, **Rep. Ron Kind** and members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation sent a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue, pressing him to take immediate action on behalf of Wisconsin dairy farmers and dairy processing businesses during this crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to threaten Wisconsin's agricultural economy, with some dairy farmers being [forced to dispose of thousands of gallons of fresh milk](#) daily due to a drop in demand for dairy products typically consumed in schools, restaurants, and food services. This puts a strain on an already struggling industry. For the past two years, Wisconsin has [led](#) the nation in farm bankruptcies with an average of two dairy farms closing a day.

“Our dairy farmers were already struggling, and this pandemic puts them into even more of a crisis. They cannot afford to have the USDA stall on helping farmers in Wisconsin by reopening the Dairy Margin Coverage program,” said **Rep. Ron Kind**. “It is baffling to understand why Secretary Perdue is dragging his feet on helping dairy farmers when he has full authority to reopen enrollment for the Dairy Margin Coverage program right now. Congress did its job to give him the tools he needs to support dairy. Now he needs to do his.”

Specifically, Kind and the delegation are asking Secretary Perdue to use tools that were created under the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* to connect Wisconsin dairy and cheese producers to consumers, including:

1. Reopen Dairy Margin Coverage program enrollment and make payments retroactive for all of 2020. By reopening enrollment, USDA could utilize existing authorities and distribute funds from the \$23.5 billion provided by Congress last month.
2. Provide \$450 million authorized by Congress to purchase agriculture products to distribute to food pantries through the Emergency Food Assistance Program.
3. Provide funding to Wisconsin and other states to help resolve food supply chain disruptions and keep agricultural products supply chains functioning in order to reach consumers when and where they need it.

In addition to Rep. Kind, the letter was signed by Senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson and Representatives Mike Gallagher, Glenn Grothman, Gwen Moore, Mark Pocan, and Bryan Steil.

The full letter to USDA is available [here](#).